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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [KIRF](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: USING INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
DAY TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVISM AMONG KUWAIT'S YOUTH

REF: STATE 222349 AND 219905

¶1. PolChief participated December 10 in a program organized by the American Universal School in celebration of International Human Rights Day. Addressing an audience of approximately 100 students aged 15-16, and drawing from reftel, she emphasized the U.S. commitment to promoting and safeguarding human rights, and congratulated the Government of Kuwait for demonstrating respect for Kuwaiti women by the May 16, 2005 decision to grant them full political rights. During a brief question and answer period, the high school students asked about detainees at Guantanamo Bay and torture, trafficking in persons, and human rights advances in Iraq since the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

¶2. Other speakers included Dr. Ghanim Al-Najar from Kuwait University (KU), who commented that he was straying from his prepared remarks because he had to address what he considered to be a total misunderstanding of human rights issues by the U.S. He proceeded to critique U.S. policy and alleged that the detention of enemy combatants at Guantanamo was a blatant violation of human rights, a topic he addressed in a December 10 column in Arabic-language daily Al Qabas. After the event, several speakers apologized to PolChief and the Cultural Affairs Assistant for Al-Najar's politicization of day's theme. (Note: Ironically, EmbOffs have been invited to a December 11 event in honor of Al-Najar's appointment as an independent expert to the UN Human Rights Commission. End Note.)

¶3. KU professors Dr. Muhammed Al-Feeli and Yacoub Al-Hayati spoke of the philosophical and theological origins of the human rights movement and implored the students to become more involved, stressing that individuals do have the power to force change. Student speaker Khalid Ibrahim challenged his generation to do what their parents could not: respect individual freedoms and dignity, end hunger, and encourage universal education. He also questioned how he and his colleagues could claim to support human rights and at the same time oppose the trial of Saddam Hussein.

¶4. The day's events, covered by the media, also included a student-produced video on the use of sanctions to force improvements of governments' human rights records; a skit on the importance of speaking out when witnessing the abuse of individual rights; and board games, posters, and papers, from students on human rights themes.

¶5. The Universal American School has a student body of approximately 800 students, ranging in age from three to 19. The director and owner, Nora Al-Ghanim, is a prominent Kuwaiti businesswoman and a close contact of the Cultural Affairs Section.

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